

PRINCIPLE FOUR: ATTRACTIVE ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

THE IMPORTANCE OF A WELL DESIGNED ENVIRONMENT



Atttractive buildings and spaces contribute to a positive neighborhood identity and engaging pedestrian environment. Quality and appropriate architecture integrates all components of a compact neighborhood and carefully accommodates the intensity of activity necessary to a successful transit area without changing the positive character of the community.

CONCEPTS

Attractive, appropriate architecture and design...

- Accommodates increased densities with sensitive and appropriate design.
- Provides transitions in density and scale to connect new development with the existing neighborhood.
- Provides buildings and spaces that interact with street life and create a safe and attractive environment.
- Promotes site design that creates pedestrian places and manages the presence of automobile traffic.



New buildings should reflect and define the neighborhood. Large streets, such as Pennsylvania Avenue, need larger buildings to define the edge of the public space.

GUIDELINES

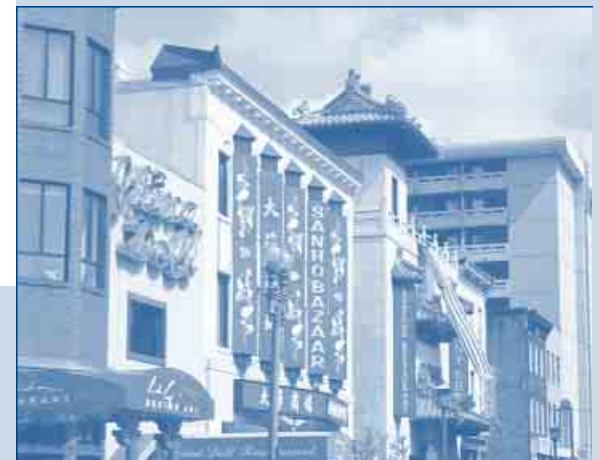
A. Utilize distinctive architecture to help define neighborhood identity and character.

- Design buildings of appropriate scale and massing with distinctive architecture to highlight important or significant places within the neighborhood.
- Promote contemporary architecture that introduces interest and diversity. While buildings must be sensitive to the character of neighborhoods outside of historic districts, it is not necessary for all buildings to adopt historic styles.
- Provide site design that is responsive to community priorities concerning public space and parking.

B. Emphasize quality architecture and design to create a pedestrian environment with distinctive character.

- Design the ground floor facades of all buildings to maximize transparency, architectural details, multiple entrances, and interesting signage and lighting.
- Avoid blank walls along major streets or pedestrian pathways.
- Provide frequent and attractive entrances into buildings along the street wall. (Refer to Principle Four: a pedestrian-friendly environment, for more strategies for relating buildings to a pedestrian environment.)

Architectural details help reinforce the character of a community whether it is historic Capitol Hill (above) or the Asian influences in Chinatown (below).



DC's new storefront design guidelines encourage attractive signage, front doors and window displays to create a more interesting and attractive neighborhood streetscape.

Source: Nelson Architects



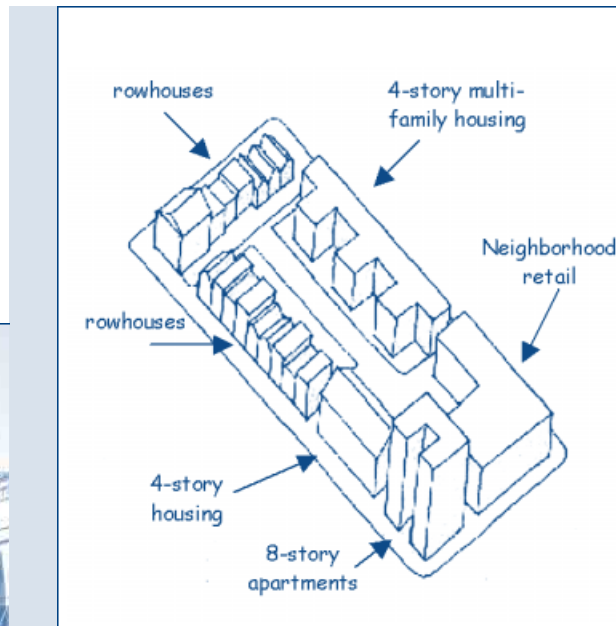
C. Integrate higher density commercial, residential and mixed uses into the existing neighborhood to support activity and safety.

- Utilize innovative and sensitive design elements to combine all new and existing land uses into one complimentary attractive environment.
- Encourage architectural details and varied façade materials to visually break up taller buildings or those of great mass.
- Step upper floors of buildings back to relate to the smaller scale of the existing neighborhood.



Contemporary design can add interest, new residents, and critical activity to a neighborhood street.

- Visually tie together buildings of different scales and uses to create one identity using similar details, materials and transitions on scale.
- Orient building entrances toward transit to encourage transit use and create a vibrant public realm around buildings and transit areas.



A traditional block near one of the District's transit stops includes a variety of opportunities for housing and retail with varying heights and styles of buildings that work together to create an interesting streetscape.
Source: Tara Penders

ANATOMY OF A BLOCK

On blocks near transit areas in the District of Columbia you will find a number of different uses, building types and building heights. This is normal for many urban neighborhoods.

Imagine walking around a typical block. On the corner you may find an elegant old eight story apartment building. Next door is a row of smaller, four story multi-family homes along side 2 to 3 story row houses. At the far corner is a neighborhood corner store with a residence above it and single-family homes extending down the block.

At the next corner, you encounter some attractive condominium buildings about 6 stories in height. At the fourth corner is a large retail building with shops, offices and residential units. Parking is accommodated behind the building at the interior of the block.

You can find this block, or a variation on it, throughout the District. Some blocks may have more single-family houses, some may be without retail, but many will have a diversity of housing types and densities occurring on the block. This variation of use and building heights adds interest to the block, as well as activity and safety to the neighborhood.



High density residential or mixed land uses are desirable in the immediate vicinity of transit stations.



Moderate density residential units are appropriate in the mixed-use zone around transit stations.



Low-density residential dwellings like the one above in Congress Heights are appropriate farther from the defined center.

D. Transition density and residential types to fit into the surrounding neighborhood.

- Decrease density of development with distance from transit and the neighborhood center to provide a variety of housing and service options. For example, provide high-density housing in close proximity to transit stops, moderate density housing as you move away from the center and low density housing only in the surrounding neighborhood.
- Encourage a mix of residential units close to transit within the neighborhood center. A change in density can accommodate different housing types and households within an easy walk of transit, jobs and services.
- Encourage increased residential densities in a variety of types in transit centers to provide affordable housing options, access to jobs and services, while supporting diversity.
- Encourage moderate density housing that provides a transition in scale and character at the perimeter of the center while accommodating a variety of household types.
- Accommodate low-density housing outside the defined transit center. While not appropriate at the core, single family homes in the neighborhood support diversity and provide a larger consumer base for nearby commercial services.